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Fiction lovers, history buffs go digital at library

AMANDA IACONE
The Journal Gazette

More Allen County readers are opting to pick up library materials from the comfort of their home instead of by making a trip to their nearest branch.

The library offers digital copies of popular books for readers and researchers to save for free to their home computers. Whether it's the audio-book version of Dan Brown's latest novel or the text and scanned pages from a local history volume, more library patrons are going digital.

In Allen County, odd titles like Virginia County Records and a Fort Wayne city directory from 1870 are among the popular texts that library patrons have downloaded in recent weeks.

The Allen County Public Library provides almost 8,000 titles from its genealogy collection for patrons to browse, view and download to their personal computers for free. An additional 2,088 popular fiction and non-fiction titles are available for leisure readers

Library, Page 4C

Samuel Hoffman | The Journal Gazette

Deb Eidson downloads genealogical data from the Allen County Public Library from her Monroeville home office.

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LIBRARY

Continued from Page 1C

to download.

The genealogy texts are the most popular digital books that the local library offers. More than 1 million digital-text versions of genealogy materials have been downloaded since June 2008.

In comparison, patrons have downloaded audiobook files 18,000 times since the beginning of 2009 from the leisure-reading collection.

Popular picks

When the genealogy center launched its digital collection in 2008, genealogy Manager Curt Witcher hoped it would act as a springboard for researchers and spur them to make a trip to Fort Wayne to take advantage of the local resources.

"We couldn't buy this kind of advertising," Witcher said.

But he also believed it would better serve the many genealogists living here if the library could put more information at their fingertips, he said.

The library sought grants and financial help from its foundation to pay for the digital scanning and making the documents searchable. The non-profit Internet Archive scans the materials and hosts the Web site, which draws about 1 million visitors a month, Witcher said.

Digitized genealogy materials have no copyright, allowing the library to duplicate them. Eventually, Witcher would like to make the center's 100,000 public-domain materials available on the Internet , he said.

Currently the most popular download is the "Yorkshire Marriage Registers, West Riding, Vol. 2" from 1914. Internet patrons have downloaded the text more than 3,300 times, library spokeswoman Cheryl Ferverda said.

Marriage records are important resources for genealogists, but library officials aren't sure why that volume is so popular, she said.

But the five most downloaded genealogy books are related to the British Isles. Witcher believes many current residents of the United Kingdom – not just British descendants living in San Fernando, Calif., or Kalamazoo, Mich. – are using those resources, he said.

Deb Eidson, 60, of Monroeville has taken advantage of the digital collection to research township schools and her own family history.

Eidson frequently used the "History of the Upper Maumee Valley" at the downtown library and hoped to buy her own copy. She searched the Internet and came across the library's Internet Archive and in 10 minutes was able to download both volumes to her home computer, she said.

The searchable text makes it easier to find a name that is not listed in the book's index, Eidson said.

Into Overdrive

Local readers opting for lighter reading such as "French Women Don't Get Fat" prefer to download audio books from the library's collection so they can listen while they exercise, work or sit on the beach, library staff said.

These listeners are more likely to be in their teens, 20s or 30s, Ferverda said.

Younger readers are more accepting of new technology, are used to looking at a small screen and are more likely to own a handheld device that will play the files, said Mollie Pharo, collection development manager for the Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library.

The Allen County Public Library provides some audio downloads that can be heard from any MP3 player. Some iPod-compatible titles are also available, said Kathy Witwer, the library's adult bibliographer.

The library works with a vendor called Overdrive to provide the digital files. Patrons choose a title and enter their library card number to download the file. The file is stored on their computer for 14 days before disappearing. Listeners don't have to worry about overdue fees, fines due to damage or losing the book, Witwer said.

Subscribing to Overdrive costs the library $21,000 a year. In addition, the library pays a monthly $3,500 fee. Witwer spends $1,500 a month to buy about 30 titles, which are typically less expensive than hard copies of books, officials said.

The library introduced the Overdrive service in spring 2008, Witwer said, and circulation took a leap this summer.

'The future'

But the 18,402 audiobook downloads so far this year are a fraction of the 205,550 audio books that have circulated this year, Witwer said.

St. Joseph County Public Library has watched its circulation of digital audio books grow during the past three years, library spokesman David Hanna said.

Circulation of iPod-compatible files is on pace to increase 50 percent this year compared with 2008. The files are frequently on loan, and officials are considering expanding the service to two branches. Patrons now must go in person to the main branch to download and remove files, Hanna said.

The limited circulation plus the cost to pay for Overdrive and to buy the new digital books might make it seem as if it's not worth it, Evansville's Pharo said.

"But these are going to become more popular. This is a big chunk of the future here."

Circulation isn't as high as Allen County library staff would like, either. But to attract more readers, the library has to offer more titles, which takes money that could reduce purchases for other materials, such as books, Witwer said.

Offering a better selection is a challenge for libraries, not just because of tight budgets but also because not all publishers make their books available in digital format for libraries. They fear that consumers won't buy the titles and instead will borrow them for free from the library.

But those publishers forget that libraries have offered free books for years without hurting the profits of publishing houses. In fact, Witwer said, people are more likely to buy a book at the store if they have borrowed it first at the library.

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Samuel Hoffman | The Journal Gazette

Searching for names in genealogical materials is easier with digital files, Deb Eidson says.

HOW IT WORKS

■ Allen County Public Library patrons can browse digital audio-book offerings by going to www.acpl.lib.in.us and clicking "Downloadable Audiobooks" from the front page.

First-time users will need to download Overdrive software to their home computers. Patrons must have a valid Allen County Public Library card to use the service. They will also need a player like Windows Media Player or a hand-held device that is able to display the WMA- or iPod-formatted files.

■ To view or download genealogy materials, go to www.archive.org and search for "Allen County Public Library" to see a complete list of available titles. Researchers can download an entire book or just a page, and they may choose from file types like flip book, PDF and JPEG.

CHECK IT OUT

Allen County Public Library
2,088 – Digital audio books available
18,000 – Titles downloaded through mid-November
6.4 million – Total items circulated in 2008

Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library
950 – E-books available
2,500 – Digital audio books available
2,062 – E-books downloaded through mid-November
7,206 – Audio books downloaded through mid-November
3.1 million – Total items circulated in 2008

St. Joseph County Public Library
900 – Digital audio books available
3,486 – Audio books downloaded in 2008
2.7 million – Total items circulated in 2008

...ce is 4 p.m. Monday at Trinity United Methodist Church, 609 Putnam Street, Fort Wayne, with calling one hour prior. Calling for family and friends also from 2 to 6 p.m. today at the church. Arrangements by Covington Memorial Gardens Funeral Home and Cemetery.

HENDERSON, DONALD G. "BUSTER": Funeral service is 11 a.m. Monday at Brazzell Funeral Homes, Avilla Chapel, 530 North Main Street, Avilla. (260)897-3411. Visitation is from 3 to 8 p.m. today at the funeral home, with a Masonic service at 7 p.m.

HOUCK, DAVID L.: Service is noon Monday at Zwick & Jahn Funeral Home, Decatur, with calling two hours prior.

HOWELL, JUDY A.: Memorial service is 2 p.m. Monday at Zechar-Bailey Funeral Home, Greenville, Ohio, where the family will receive friends from 1 to 2 p.m. Monday.

LEEPER, VELMA KAY: Funeral service is 11 a.m. Monday at D.O. McComb & Sons Covington Knolls Funeral Home Chapel, 8325 Covington Road, with calling one hour prior. Calling also from 2 to 4 and 6 to 8 p.m. today at the funeral home.

MERCER, EILEEN MARIE: Funeral Mass is 10 a.m. Monday at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, Angola. Visitation is from 2 to 6 p.m. today and from 9 to 9:45 a.m. Monday at Weicht Funeral Home, 207 N. West Street, Angola.

NEUHAUS, SUSAN DREW (FRANKE): Mass of Christian Burial is 1 p.m. Monday at St. Jude Catholic Church, 2130 Pemberton Dr., with calling one hour prior. Calling also from 2 to 5 and 7 to 9 p.m. today at D.O. McComb & Sons Pine Valley Park Funeral Home, 1320 East Dupont Road, with Vigil at 4:30 p.m.

PALLONE, RITA J.: Mass of Christian Burial is 10 a.m. Wednesday at Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Visitation is from 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday at Mungovan & Sons Funeral Home, 2114 S. Calhoun Street.

PEEK, VIRGINIA E.: Funeral service was 2 p.m. Monday, Nov. 23, 2009, at Faith Baptist Church, Winter Haven, Fla., with calling one hour prior. Burial is 1 p.m. Monday in the Bohn Chapel, Lindenwood Cemetery, Fort Wayne. Arrangements by Klaehn, Fahl & Melton Funeral Home, Wayne Street Chapel, Fort Wayne.

SMEAD, CHARLES E.: Service is 10 a.m. Monday at D.O. McComb & Sons Pine Valley Park Funeral Home, 1320 East Dupont Road, with calling one hour prior. Calling also from 2 to 5 and 7 to 9 p.m. today at the funeral home.

SMITH, EARL D.: Service is 11 a.m. Monday at Elzey-Patterson-Rodak Funeral Home, 120 West Mill Street, Ossian. Visitation is from 2 to 7 p.m. today at the funeral home, with Masonic service at 6:30 p.m. today.

and boyfriend, Stephen E. Quick II. They found a videotape whose graphic images, taken over five months beginning in September 2008, sickened even longtime deputies.

"I've been a police officer for almost 30 years, and it was probably the most sick, dis-

Quick have declined to comment.

Broken trust

The scars the case has left could be permanent, both for the victims and the one-stoplight community about

Bill Hackerd said the case was dropped for lack of evidence.

Investigators say the assaults occurred between September 2008 and February 2009 and that they do not believe there are any victims other than those shown on the tape.

Boy, 8, shot while hunting

HOLLY ABRAMS
The Journal Gazette

An 8-year-old Howard County boy was critically wounded in an accidental shooting while hunting with his father Saturday, according to Huntington County Sheriff's deputies.

The shooting was reported about 7:30 a.m. in a wooded area south of 9935 W. County Road 900 South.

Deputies said Jacob Weaver of Greentown was in a tree stand hunting with his father, Glen Weaver, when the accident happened.

The boy accidentally kicked the shotgun, knocking it over. The gun discharged, shooting him in the left side of the chest, according to deputies.

Jacob Weaver was taken by medical helicopter to Fort Wayne's Parkview Hospital.

He was listed in critical condition Saturday.

Police said no charges will be filed.

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Robbers strike 2 businesses

HOLLY ABRAMS
The Journal Gazette

Fort Wayne police believe two armed robberies Saturday are connected.

The first robbery was reported just before 11 a.m. in the 2100 block of South Calhoun Street, police said. Two men entered the business, brandished knives, demanded money and left with an undisclosed amount of cash, according to officer John Chambers, Fort Wayne police spokesman.

The men are believed to have left on foot. A complete description was not available.

Just after 11 a.m., a second robbery was reported at the Dairy Queen at 412 Southview Ave., near Paulding Road and Lafayette Street.

Two men, also armed with knives, robbed the business in the same manner and left on foot, police said.

No one was injured in either robbery.

Police dogs were used in both cases to track the robbers without success, Chambers said.

Anyone with information on the robberies is asked to call police at 427-1201.

habrams@jg.net

CHARITY WISHES

For readers looking to share the spirit of giving this holiday season, the following is a list of agencies that responded to The Journal Gazette's call for wish lists. All addresses listed are in Fort Wayne unless otherwise indicated. Other wish lists can be found at www.journalgazette.net.

Animal-related

Helping Paws Pet Haven
468-2292
Provides: A safe haven for orphaned, neglected and abused felines until we can find their forever homes
To help: Donate canned cat food (Friskies, 9lives), cat litter, dry Science Diet cat food, cleaning supplies, cat treats, toys, scratching posts, blankets and towels, cat beds and funding for medical needs from 8 a.m. to noon Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at 2242 S. Marion Road

Allen County SPCA
744-0454
Provides: A limited-admission shelter for stray and owner-surrendered cats and dogs that also provides community education and outreach programs
To help: Donate gift cards from home improvement and office-supply stores, 18-inch rotary paper cutter, Kong-brand dog toys, disposable scratching boards in a box, paper towels, toilet tissue, 39-gallon heavy-duty trash bags, 13-gallon tall white trash bags, copy paper, postage stamps and 8-inch or 9-inch digital-picture frames from noon to 5 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, noon to 7 p.m. Thursdays and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays at 4914 Hanna St.

Second Chance Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
625-3829
Provides: Care for orphaned, ill and injured wildlife with the ultimate goal of returning them to the wild
To help: Donate canned dog or cat food, squeaky toys, pet carriers, PetSmart or grocery gift certificates, canned fruit and vegetables, towels for bedding, and liquid laundry or dish soap at 207 W. Hamilton Road N.; call for drop-off times

Black Pine Animal Park
636-7383
Provides: A safe haven for rescued and retired exotic animals and educational programs promoting responsible pet ownership
To help: Donate cash, paper towels, toilet paper, grocery or fuel gift cards, grass hay (no alfalfa), straw, fresh produce, frozen beef, venison or poultry; shady mix grass seed, small-size shrub rakes, absorbent rubber floor squeegees, rabbit food and a mineral block for goats and sheep from 8 p.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays at 1426 W. 300 N, Albion; call to arrange alternate drop-off times; see the park's Holiday Giving Guide at www.blackpineanimalpark.com/guide.htm

Chocolate Box Horse Rescue
479-7727
Provides: Shelter for elderly and medically needy horses
To help: Donate horse treats, joint supplements, bagged bedding, bags of cubed hay, Purina Equine Senior complete horse feed, new or used grooming equipment, turnout blankets, pitchforks, wheelbarrows, hay mangers, buckets, large water tank heaters and gift certificates from Brueggeman's Do-it Best, Milan Center Feed, Rural King and Tractor Supply, Mondays through Fridays at Church of God, 3320 Trier Road, and Allen's Gift Shop, Speedway II Flea Market, 217 Marciel Drive